

Transcript 148

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. On occasion, we like to invite a guest, either an expert on topic or an author of a book to discuss an issue with us today and that's what this episode is going to be. Joining me today is Taylor Turkington. She's the author of Trembling Faith. How a distressed prophet helps us trust God in a chaotic world. So Taylor, welcome to the show today.

Taylor Turkington

So glad to be here, Shea. Thanks for having me.

Shea Houdmann

It's awesome. When I read your book, one of the things interesting me most about it is that it's on the book of Habakkuk, which is probably my favorite book in the minor prophets. And just as a funny story, my wife at one time had a fish that she named Habbakook. And so whenever I say the book of Habakkuk, I have to be careful to remind myself of the correct pronunciation. But Habakkuk I think is such an interesting book with so many things that can apply to us and questions that we have and struggles that we have in our life. So, but Taylor, why don't you tell our audience a little bit about yourself and what led you to write Trembling Faith.

Taylor Turkington

Thank you. I live in Portland, OR with my family. And I direct a ministry called Bible equipping. So a lot of my work revolves around how do we help women study and teach the Bible? But if you were going to, if I was going to draw a timeline of my life and show you where things got really hard, there'd be a little dot there that said, when I ended up in the book of Habakkuk. Because through my life, God has consistently comforted me through the Book of Habakkuk. That doesn't mean I always understood everything that was going on because it began even in my teen years when I was struggling to understand the chaos of the world and how things were broken and unjust. And then later in life when I was struggling with my health and in the hospital wondering when I would get out or times when I had leaders making decisions that were really unhealthy and impacting my family. All of these times when I was feeling like God, what are you doing? I felt like there was a conversation with God in the Book of Habakkuk. And he led me to this place of understanding how to walk in faith in the midst of a chaotic world.

Shea Houdmann

That's excellent. If I were to try to summarize the book of Habakkuk, I find that's one of the easier, especially in the Old Testament prophets, to summarize. Chapter one Habakkuk is saying, Lord, there's wickedness all around me. When are you going to do something about it? God says, OK, here's what I'm going to do. Habakkuk responds like, but the people you're going to bring the judge us or even worse than us, how could you do something like that? God gives his response in Chapter 3 is more of Habakkuk saying, Lord, I trust you. I know you're good, and I know you're going to work it out in the end. So what, what are some of the aspects you have found in the Book of Habakkuk that's really, they've helped you in your walk with Christ.

Taylor Turkington

So in this that like I thought your summary was great, it's this journey right here. Habakkuk is interacting with God and processing his own faith. And we get to kind of listen in. And at the beginning there is that lament where it's almost feels scandalous to read it in the scriptures where he's really saying God, why have you not done anything yet? It says how long Lord must I call for help and you do not listen? Cry out to you about violence and you do not save? And I think it has given me this understanding that God can hear our honest prayers. That lament is saying, God, you are good and just and right. And this world is not. Like there's a discrepancy here, and rightly so. It's OK to be upset. And throughout this we see all these different emotions in Habakkuk, fear and anger and sadness. And recognizing that we walk in this world with all of those.

Taylor Turkington

I have a four year old, so we call them sharp feeling sometimes you know, so but these hard feelings to deal with. And that God welcomes us into conversation about those things. And even though, like you said, the response to Habakkuk's prayer wasn't what he was expecting or what he wanted, right? And yet God still gives him these ideas of the next steps of this is how you walk in faith. That the central verse of Habakkuk is at 2:4 that vision that God gives of how the righteous live by faith in contrast to the arrogant who will not stand in the end? Who are self dependent and rather than those who throw themselves on the grace of the Lord.

Shea Houdmann

If I were to look at the most frequently asked questions that Got Questions that are that we receive that Habakkuk's answers discussed, one of them would definitely be sort of the why does God allow evil, injustice, suffering. And that's something that Habakkuk deals a lot with with his both a call for justice and then also a complaint against injustice, something that we all also struggle with. So if you were to be talking to the Prophet Habakkuk right now, how do you think he would answer that question of why does God allow evil, and justice, suffering?

Taylor Turkington

And I think what's interesting about the dialogue is in this is that I don't think God fully answers the question. And that he doesn't like, we pull back the curtain and say Habakkuk here is the whole understanding of it. Instead, it's as if he brings Habakkuk to this high point on a hill and says look out over all of my big plan. I am the God that ultimately brings Justice Habakkuk. Because in the beginning, Habakkuk is complaining about the injustice in God's people in Judah and that he's actually going to bring God is going to bring discipline against them. There is a discipline that they they because they're they've broken the covenant so there's going to be discipline. And then God later says yes, he agrees the people that are bringing discipline, those Babylonians are doing wrong as well.

Taylor Turkington

And there's a song in Chapter 2 verses 6 through 20 there where he says that he's a God who ultimately is going to bring the the consequences, the accountability. And so I think in some ways like like Job in the book of Job we don't get the full answer. Instead God tells us who he is. And like you said, I think chapter 3 is really Habakkuk's answer of this question. Of OK God, if things are so broken I know this, I

can trust in your character. Which is this like fantasy language in the beginning of Chapter 3. The song where he sings about the power of God and ends with this joy, even if he loses things that he needs.

Shea Houdmann

Because we just recently did a podcast episode on sort of why does God allow suffering? And ultimately that's the we we titled that episode was the hardest question for us to answer. Anytime you put a, why does God allow? And I loved how you said like, both in the Book of Job to a large extent is that at least as is recorded, God never explains to Job what was going on behind the scenes.

Taylor Turkington

Right, yeah.

Shea Houdmann

Same thing in Habakkuk. God doesn't necessarily explain why he's doing it the way he is. He just calls on Habakkuk to trust.

Taylor Turkington

Right.

Shea Houdmann

And so the whole trust in God when you don't understand why he's doing something certainly that, that's a huge question that we get. And it's something we keep going back to is like this side of eternity and I don't even know if the next side of eternity, if God's going to explain, answer all the questions we have. But learning to trust in the middle of lament. Being able to mourn and grieve something terrible that has happened, something you don't understand, but continuing to trust God. What have you found? What's the key to being able to do both, to both lament Biblically and also can trust God wholeheartedly in the midst of that?

Taylor Turkington

Yeah. And I think that if we're just going to, if you're going to narrow in on that third chapter of Habakkuk there, like I, I've called this it's a Psalm, right? If you guys haven't read Habakkuk recently, it's it ends with this Psalm or song. And I think that it, I've called it the song, for those who don't get their prayer answered how they want it. Because it's really Habakkuk's response saying this is what faith looks like when you're grieving and you're afraid and yet still walking by trembling faith. And it is a recounting through big poetic language of God's salvation in the exodus. So it's looking back like, look, God is the one who saves. Look, look, look at his power. Look at the way He's cared for us. And if you look down there's this repeated word of salvation throughout that chapter. And it's because they were supposed to be seeing God is the one who saves us. That's what all this power is in working in the world. And we don't look back to the exodus, remembering that our God saved us. We look back to with the work of Jesus Christ and say, look, he's a God who saves us.

Taylor Turkington

And yet at the same time, Habakkuk is super honest. He hit verse 16 in the chapter and he says that he is shaking right? Like he's trembling. His guts are are trembling. He he's having a physical reaction to the

very real emotions of grief, and loss, and fear. And that's really good for us to recognize that that's very real in our lives. And that doesn't mean that we aren't walking with God. It doesn't mean that we aren't having faith. That sometimes we can have all these emotions to think like, oh, I must not be walking with the Lord anymore. But that's not true. That's not what we see in these examples. But rather, Habakkuk says, like we can have full grief, full fear, full anger, even. But these are not things that are happening that don't feel just and still walk in faith.

Taylor Turkington

The the last verses that it goes after chapter verse 16 there is this the most famous ones on Habakkuk. So if our listeners have read Habakkuk, these might be the ones that they remember. It's where it talks about that the fig tree doesn't bud. And there's no fruit on the vines. Though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food. That the fluxes appear from the pen and there are no herds in the stall. Yet I will celebrate in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. And it's as if Habakkuk can say I will lose a lot and things will get really uncomfortable and unstable. Yet I will not lose the Lord, therefore, I can keep going. And I think it says someone who's grieving if they're listening right now, I would say don't think that the Lord has abandoned you in your grief, and somehow we know that grief and joy can intermingle.

Shea Houdmann

The verses that you had read and it's funny, I was thinking and we should probably read those verses because not only are they the most famous verses in the book of Habakkuk, but to me this is versus like that is why you read the minor prophets. Because almost every one of the minor prophets has a little jewel like this. You you needed someone. Oh, that's beautiful. That must be from Psalm. Oh that must be that's from the new. Those are the words of Jesus or something, no! This is Habakkuk. This sort of things, and then verse 19 even. And sovereign Lord is my strength.

Taylor Turkington

Yes, read it.

Shea Houdmann

He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to tread on the height that ends. And so much of book of Habakkuk I wouldn't say just depressing. But it's like it's real. This is like the the stuff the struggles we deal with in life, but it ends on such a positive note. It's like God enables me to handle these things in his strength and his power, of course. But he he brings me through it. And helps me to trust him. It gives me reasons to trust him by how he's shown himself to be mighty and powerful throughout both my life, throughout the Scriptures, and so forth. But Habakkuk is such a beautiful book. I can totally tell why you would choose to write a book on it, and also with the focus of trembling faith. And still let our listeners know we'll include some links to where you can find Taylor's book, Trembling Faith because it is a it's it's an excellent read. And it's a topic that a lot of people need to be well versed on. And Habakkuk is a book that's far too often neglected. So Taylor as we continue, can you give them what are some other nuggets that you have found in the book of Habakkuk that you think would be encouraging and helpful to to people who are going through a struggle similar to what Habakkuk was dealing with?

Taylor Turkington

No, that's great. Thank you. I think those ones we read at the end are some of the famous wonderful ones. But I also have really been encouraged by this woe song in the middle. Sometimes we think of woe songs and we're like, oh. We just skim over and keep going. But it's this song of saying that, you know, if you see people who are doing things that are unjust or mistreating others or maybe even mistreating you, like you have had people use their power to harm you, be so that they have more and you have less. And we've been watching, you read the news today and you see those things happening, and sometimes we ask what, well, who's gonna do something? Like, who's gonna hold people accountable and it's as if the the Lord is holding, raising up his hand. It's like it's not you. I do that. Like I will hold people accountable who mistreat others.

Taylor Turkington

And though it's got some strong language throughout, it ends in this stanza, so there's five stanzas, kind of. You think about a song, and it comes to the fifth one. It talks about idolatry and it talks about how, ultimately, these things of mistreating other people are rooted in the fact of like, what do we worship? And woe to him who says to would wake up as if you're going as if it's going to teach you. And then it goes on to say you know it's played with gold. There's no breath of it in it. I'm in verse 19 of Chapter 2 and then verse 20. But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let the whole earth be silent in his presence. So it's as if reminding us that, you know, if you are in a place where, like, it feels like other people are taking advantage of you and you just don't have any ability to do anything about it, Habakkuk would say lament call out to the Lord. But also know God will handle the justice. And if you don't see it in your lifetime, people will either have to stand before him or it will fall on Jesus. And they'll be forgiven because of the work that saved you as well. And that rather we can worship the Lord in his holy temple. He's the one who speaks. He's the one who teaches. That the idols that others may follow ultimately don't bring them any good.

Taylor Turkington

And it seems like kind of this bizarre section here, but it's been so encouraging to me and in the middle of it, it's as if there's this, this jewel like you said, and it talks about the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the water covers the sea. So even as God is going to bring justice on the earth, he's also going to fill the earth with his glory.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent point and Habakkuk 2 has, the the end of Chapter 3 gets a lot of the attention, but there's what are called jewels or nuggets throughout the book that like wow, not only is while Habakuk was dealing with a very different situation than we typically deal with in our personal lives, but so many of the principles apply. One thing that's always attracted me to this book is how much the Prophet Habakkuk focused on the attributes of God, the character of God as his reason for trusting God, even when he didn't understand or trusting God in in the midst of a lament. He's singing a woeful song, but he's never losing his trust and faith. So what would you say? What are some of the attributes, characteristics of God that Habakkuk focuses on that we can also focus on when we're dealing with a difficult situation?

Taylor Turkington

Yeah, that's that's wonderful Shea. And I and I think that one of the things that this book does is it helps us to give words to prayer, right. Because so much of it is this interaction with the Lord, and it's almost as if he is helping us pray the character of God because Habakkuk does that. He prays the character of God to almost reminding God, but reminding himself as he prays it. And so even in the beginning, when he's when he's lamenting and saying what feels really strong to the Lord, I think we can remember that God welcomes us. That he is a God who has brought us into his family through Christ. I think that as we continue on it in verse 12 of chapter one, it says are you not from eternity Lord, my God, my holy one? You will not die.

Taylor Turkington

And then he goes on to call him my rock quoting Moses from Deuteronomy. This this idea, this is who God is, he is holy and he is our rock. He's the one that's going to stand even when everything else feels like it's shaking. Like he is the one that holds us firm. And in that he's also calling out to God's justice like he believes that God is the one who does what is right. That even if we look around us and see things that are really broken, we can believe that, OK, that is broken. But that's not the character of God. Like God is not unjust. God is not going to take advantage of somebody else, but he is one who does what's right. And and that in that it is his desire for his people to give them hope. Think that that's really fleshed out in chapter 2, verse four when he says that the righteous one will live by his faith, like the proud that his ego is inflated, he's not going to stand but you, you you who are mine, this is who you are. You are going to live forward because of faith in me. Faithfulness to me like faith in the Old Testament. Right? It's not just like a internal ascent that sometimes we think it can be, but rather it's a lived out belief in the character of God and following him with our lives. And that we talked about chapter three. I think his trustworthiness is really there, that he is the God who saves and is powerful and he is worth everything we could possibly lose.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent points throughout. As I went through the book on so many things that resonated with me, so many things that I had noticed in my study, but then also a few way ways of explaining things or noticing some things that I had never really picked up on before. So Taylor, Trembling Faith is an excellent book. I I praise God for what God is accomplishing you through this work. And I hope many, many people read it. As I said earlier will include some links to where people can purchase the book in the show notes when this goes live at podcast.gotquestions.org and also at the description on YouTube. So Taylor maybe to close this off on who is Trembling Faith for? If you were to describe like one person, I think many, many people and many sort of different.

Taylor Turkington

Oh, that's a great question.

Shea Houdmann

Interests or situations could be benefited by reading this. But who would you say this book is particularly for?

Taylor Turkington

I mean, I think more broadly, we would say it's for people who want to like who want to study the Bible and understand who God is. But specifically, I think it's for people who look around the world and are paying attention, they read the news and they say we are seeing pain right. Just recently to while we're recording, we've seen earthquakes on across the world, and we're seeing images and our hearts are breaking and we're praying or or we see injustice or we ourselves are feeling like things are happening, people are making decisions that are hurting me and my family and there's nothing I can do about it. We are feeling like there is chaos in this world. And we need to know how do we live faithfully, full of faith. And how do we pray in the midst of that? This book is for them to say this is the way. Let's follow Habakkuk's way. He shows us what trembling faith looks like in a chaotic world. And he gives us hope of like God's big plan across the whole, all of history bringing us to a day of justice one day.

Shea Houdmann

So thank you, Taylor Turkington, for joining me today. And again, that her book is Trembling Faith, how a distressed prophet helps us trust God in a chaotic world. So, Taylor, thank you again for joining me today.

Taylor Turkington

Thanks so much, Shea.

Shea Houdmann

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